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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Towards a culture of peace

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted in accordance with Commission resolution 1999/62

Introduction

1. In its resolution 1999/62, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report, taking into consideration the comments and views of all Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on the contribution of the promotion and protection of human rights to the further development of a culture of peace, and to present this report to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session.

2. The Commission decided to continue considering the question of a culture of peace at its fifty-sixth session, giving due attention to the fact that the year 2000 has been proclaimed by the General Assembly as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

3. In accordance with the above-mentioned request, the High Commissioner addressed a note verbale on 6 September 1999 to Governments, intergovernmental organizations and 30 non-governmental organizations inviting their comments and views by 8 November 1999.

4. As of 30 November 1999, two replies had been received, from the United States of America and Peru. These replies have been summarized below.

5. The attention of the Commission on Human Rights is drawn to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (E/CN.4/2000/93) and on the programme of advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights (E/CN.4/2000/105), which contain information on human rights activities aiming at the dissemination and consolidation of a culture of peace information, education, including human rights education, awareness-raising and training, including in the area of conflict resolution.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY GOVERNMENTS

United States of America

1. Reference was made to the adoption by the General Assembly on 13 September 1999 of resolution 53/243 entitled "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace" and to the explanation of the position of the Government of the United States of America made following the adoption by consensus of the resolution.

2. With regard to the right to development in article 1 of the Declaration and paragraph 10 of the Plan of Action, it is the view of the Government of the United States that this right is focused on the individual, it is not a collective right of groups or States and it is up to national Governments to create conditions conducive to the progressive realization of economic development. It is not a legal entitlement to a set standard of living or a transfer of resources.

3. Combating violence in the media (paragraph 15 of the Plan of Action) is not interpreted as intending to restrict press reporting on violent actions such as those committed in Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and elsewhere in recent years.

4. The "priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament" (paragraph 16 of the Plan of Action) are considered to be those adopted by consensus.

Peru

1. The Government of Peru stressed that peace is the basis for economic, social, cultural and political development. With reference to the national experience, the Government highlighted the negative consequences of terrorist violence which constituted flagrant violations of human rights, disturbing peace, posing serious threats to public security and leading to more poverty and underdevelopment.

2. Following the defeat of terrorist groups and the signature of the peace agreement with Ecuador, the Government of Peru has endeavoured to promote and disseminate human rights through training courses and conferences for government personnel, military and police forces, judges and public prosecutors and members of civil society.

3. In order to ensure the consolidation of internal and external peace, a legal framework is being gradually put in place for providing full protection of all human rights for all. Article 44 of the Peruvian Constitution guarantees the full legal enjoyment of human rights and protects

the population against threats to public security. Similarly, article 14 of the Constitution makes training in ethics and civics and the teaching of the Constitution and human rights obligatory throughout the process of civil and military education.

4 A new law (No. 26872) provides that it is in the national interest to institutionalize and develop conciliation as an alternative dispute settlement mechanism. From 14 January 2000, it will be mandatory to resort to this means of settling disputes before bringing legal proceedings.

5 Promoting and protecting human rights is the basis for the development of a culture of peace, just as security is the basis for establishing the peaceful conditions necessary for a people to be able to progress with their development. Countries should make every effort to eliminate the causes of unrest, such as social and economic inequalities, and to combat and firmly suppress terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime.